AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-34. (Canceled)

35. (New) A spherical annular seal member which has a cylindrical inner surface defining a through hole in a central portion thereof, a partially convex spherical outer surface, and an annular end face on a large-diameter side of the partially convex spherical outer surface, and which is used in an exhaust pipe spherical joint of an automobile, comprising:

a reinforcing member made from a compressed metal wire net and provided in an inner portion of said spherical annular seal member which extends from the cylindrical inner surface to the partially convex spherical outer surface;

a heat-resistant material containing compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide and a phosphate, and provided in the inner portion of said spherical annular seal member, said heat-resistant material filling meshes of said metal wire net of said reinforcing member and compressed in such a manner as to be formed integrally with said reinforcing member in mixed form, said phosphorus pentoxide and said phosphate being mixed into said compressed and expanded graphite to suppress consumption of said compressed and expanded graphite due to oxidation of the same, at temperatures of 600°C to 700°C, the partially convex spherical outer surface being formed into a smooth surface where an outer surface layer of said heat-resistant material containing said compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and the phosphate, which are mixed into said compressed and expanded graphite to suppress consumption of said compressed and expanded graphite due to oxidation of the same at temperatures of 600°C to 700°C, and said reinforcing member made from the metal wire net and formed integrally with said heat-resistant material in mixed form are exposed.

36. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 35, wherein the cylindrical inner surface is formed of said heat-resistant material containing said compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and the phosphate.

37. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 35, wherein the cylindrical inner surface is formed of said reinforcing member made from the metal wire net.

38. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 35, wherein the annular end face is formed of said heat-resistant material containing said compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and the phosphate.

39. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 35, wherein said heat-resistant material is composed of 0.05 to 5.0 wt. % of phosphorus pentoxide, 1.0 to 16.0 wt. % of the phosphate, and 79.0 to 98.95 wt. % of expanded graphite.

40. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 35, wherein the phosphate is selected from lithium primary phosphate, lithium secondary phosphate,

calcium primary phosphate, calcium secondary phosphate, aluminum primary phosphate, and aluminum secondary phosphate.

41. (New) A spherical annular seal member which has a cylindrical inner surface defining a through hole in a central portion thereof, a partially convex spherical outer surface, and an annular end face on a large-diameter side of the partially convex spherical outer surface, and which is used in an exhaust pipe spherical joint of an automobile, comprising:

a reinforcing member made from a compressed metal wire net and provided in an inner portion of said spherical annular seal member which extends from the cylindrical inner surface to the partially convex spherical outer surface;

a heat-resistant material containing compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and a phosphate, and provided in the inner portion of said spherical annular seal member, said heat-resistant material filling meshes of said metal wire net of said reinforcing member and compressed in such a manner as to be formed integrally with said reinforcing member in mixed form, said phosphorus pentoxide and said phosphate being mixed into said compressed and expanded graphite to suppress consumption of said compressed and expanded graphite due to oxidation of the same at temperatures of 600°C to 700°C, the partially convex spherical surface being formed into a smooth surface where an outer surface layer of a lubricating composition containing at least boron nitride and at least one of alumina and silica and said reinforcing member made from the metal wire net and formed integrally with said lubricating composition in mixed form are exposed.

42. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein the cylindrical inner surface is formed of said heat-resistant material containing said compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and the phosphate.

43. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein the cylindrical inner surface is formed of said reinforcing member made from the metal wire net.

44. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein the annular end face is formed of said heat-resistant material containing said compressed and expanded graphite, phosphorus pentoxide, and the phosphate.

45. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein said heat-resistant material is composed of 0.05 to 5.0 wt. % of phosphorus pentoxide, 1.0 to 16.0 wt. % of the phosphate, and 79.0 to 98.95 wt. % of expanded graphite.

46. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein the phosphate is selected from lithium primary phosphate, lithium secondary phosphate, calcium primary phosphate, calcium secondary phosphate, aluminum primary phosphate, and aluminum secondary phosphate.

47. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein said lubricating composition contains 70-90 wt. % of boron nitride and 10-30 wt. % of at least one of alumina and silica.

48. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein said lubricating composition further contains polytetrafluoroethylene resin.

49. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein said lubricating composition contains a mixture consisting of 70-90 wt. % of boron nitride and 10-30 wt. % of at least one of alumina and silica, and further contains not more than 200 parts by weight of polytetrafluoroethylene resin with respect to 100 parts by weight of said mixture.

50. (New) A spherical annular seal member according to Claim 41, wherein said lubricating composition contains a mixture consisting of 70-90 wt. % of boron nitride and 10-30 wt. % of at least one of alumina and silica, and further comprising 50 to 150 parts by weight of polytetrafluoroethylene resin with respect to 100 parts by weight of said mixture.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: Richard Besha
Richard G. Besha
Reg. No. 22,770

RGB:alm
1100 North Glebe Road, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201-4714
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100